

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEL AV 07072 01 OF 02 061439Z

46

ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 EUR-08 SP-02 L-01

INR-05 IO-03 PM-03 DODE-00 CIAE-00 PRS-01 SAB-01

SAM-01 RSC-01 /052 W

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R 061347Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4841

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7072

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IS, US, XF

SUBJ: RABIN'S DECLARATIONS EVOKE PREDOMINANTLY CRITICAL REACTION

1. SUMMARY. IN SPITE OF UNDOF MANDATE RENEWAL, ISRAELIS REMAIN PESSIMISTIC AND UNCERTAIN CONCERNING PROSPECTS FOR MAINTAINING MOMENTUM OF NEGOTIATING PROCESS IN MONTHS AHEAD. COMMENTATORS AND POLITICIANS VIEW BREZHNEV CAIRO VISIT IN JANUARY 1975 AS POTENTIAL CRUCIAL POINT, AND BELIEVE PROGRESS MUST BE MADE IN ISRAEL-EGYPT NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE THEN IF SHARP DETERIORATION IS TO BE AVOIDED. IN THIS CONTEXT, RABIN'S LATEST DECLARATIONS OUTLINING NEW ELEMENTS OF FLEXIBILITY IN GOI NEGOTIATING POSITION RE EGYPT--PARTICULARLY APPARENT READINESS TO FOREGO FORMAL NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLEARATION AS POLITICAL QUID-PRO-QUO FOR NEXT WITHDRAWALS--HAVE GOTTEN MIXED, MOSTLY NEGATIVE RECEPTION.

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 07072 01 OF 02 061439Z

ON POSITIVE SIDE LATEST GOI STATEMENTS ARE SEEN AS MAXIMAL

EFFORT TO KEEP NEGOTIATIONS ALIVE, WHILE "HAWKISH" CRITICS ARGUE THAT RABIN HAS PREMATURELY ERODED GOI BARGAINING POSITION AND UNDERMINED ALLON'S NEGOTIATING FLEXIBILITY IN WASHINGTON.
END SUMMARY.

2. AGAINST BACKDROP OF UNDOF MANDATE RENEWAL, WHICH MOMENTARILY REDUCED TENSIONS, ATMOSPHERE HERE HAS REMAINED DISTINCTLY PESSIMISTIC REGARDING PROSPECTS FOR NEXT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS. POLITICAL COMMENTATORS ANALYZE INTERPLAY OF LATEST EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI PUBLIC STATEMENTS AS SIGNALLING HARDENING OF EGYPTIAN DEMANDS DESPITE CONCESSIONS IN GOI STANCE, WITH SIGNIFICANT GAP REMAINING BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. ISRAELIS ALSO VIEW BREZHNEV'S CAIRO TRIP AS REPRESENTING A POSSIBLY CRITICAL TURNING POINT FOR NEXT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS, FORESEEING INCREASED TENSION AND DANGER OF RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES IF THERE IS NO PROGRESS IN ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN TALKS BY THEN. SOME ISRAELI COMMENTATORS BELIEVE THAT EGYPT AND USSR HAVE ALREADY REACHED AGREEMENT FOR STRENGTHENING OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY TIES. IT IS ALSO OF SOME INTEREST THAT, ACCORDING TO LATEST PORI POLL (SEPTEL),

AN INCREASED NUMBER OF ISRAELIS (63PERCENT IN NOV, AS AGAINST 55 PERCENT IN OCT) BELIEVE THAT DESPITE CURRENT NEGOTIATING EFFORTS THERE WILL BE NEW WAR IN NEAR FUTURE.

3. IN LAST WEEK, PRIME MINISTER RABIN HAS MADE THREE MAJOR PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND ALSO GIVEN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW TO HAARETZ (TEL AVIV 6982) ASSESSING INTERNATIONAL SITUATION CONFRONTING ISRAEL AND OUTLINING NEW, MORE FLEXIBLE ISRAELI APPROACH TO NEXT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT. IN CONTRAST TO LOW-KEY APPROACH SIGNALLED BY PRIME MINISTER ALLON TO PRESS FIVE DAYS AGO (TEL AVIV 6926), RABIN'S DECLARATIONS HAVE DRAMATIZED IMPORTANCE OF WASHINGTON DISCUSSIONS FOR PROSPECTS OF PEACE OR WAR.

4. PRESS HAS FOCUSED ON RABIN'S STATEMENT IN HAARETZ INTERVIEW THAT HE WOULD BE WILLING TO CONFINE NEXT STAGE TO MILITARY AGREEMENT, GIVING UP ISRAELI DEMAND FOR FORMAL EGYPTIAN DECLARATION OF NON-BELLIGERENCY AS POLITICAL COUNTER-VALUE FOR FURTHER
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 07072 01 OF 02 061439Z

ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL IN THE SINAI, AND ACCEPTING, INSTEAD, SECRET EGYPTIAN POLITICAL COMMITMENTS TO THE US. QUESTION OF WHERE NEW LINES IN SINAI MIGHT BE LOCATED IS APPARENTLY OPEN (ALTHOUGH PRESS HAS CITED GOI SOURCES STATING THAT WITHDRAWAL WOULD NOT INCLUDE JIDDI AND MITLA PASSES OR ABU RODEIS). RABIN TOLD TEL AVIV HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DECEMBER 4 THAT "WHEN THE OTHER SIDE IS READY TO TALK ABOUT PEACE, WE WILL DEFINE THE NEW LINES FROM OUR SIDE

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 07072 02 OF 02 061438Z

46

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7072

LIMDIS

5. GOI REPORTEDLY WANTS EGYPTIAN QUID-PRO-QUO FOR ISRAELI
WITHDRAWAL ALSO TO INCLUDE ASSENT TO TWO-THREE YEAR TIME FRAME
FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA AND JORDAN RE GOLAN
HEIGHTS AND WEST BANK.

6. SEVERAL ISRAELI COMMENTATORS HAVE SHRAPLY CRITIZED RABIN
FOR MAKING PUBLIC DECLARATIONS RE ISRAELI NEGOTIATING POSITION ON
FOLLOWING GROUNDS: (A) THAT HE HAS UNNECESSARILY AND PREMATURELY
WEAKENED ISRAEL'S BARGAINING POSITION -- WITHOUT RECEIVING ANY
ADVANCE SIGNAL OF COMPARABLE FLEXIBILITY FROM EGYPT; (B) PRE-
CONDITIONED TERMS OF DISCUSSION FOR ALLON'S WASHINGTON VISIT;
AND (C) GIVEN ERRONEOUS SIGNAL TO ARABS OF ISRAELI WEAKNESS.

7. IN MORE POSITIVE ASSESSMENT, MINORITY OF COMMENTATORS

HAVE NOTED FOLLOWING CONSIDERATIONS UNDERLING RABIN'S DECLARATIONS:

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 07072 02 OF 02 061438Z

(A) DESIRABILITY OF GAINING TIME FROM MILITARY VIEWPOINT; (B) IMPORTANCE OF MAXIMUM ISRAELI RESPONSIVENESS TO USG NEGOTIATING INITIATIVE, SO THAT IF WAR SHOULD COME THERE WILL BE NO DOUBT AS TO WHO IS RESPONSIBLE; AND (C) LEAVING OPEN OPTION FOR EGYPT TO ENTER INTO SEPARATE AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL DESPITE POST-RABAT LOYALTY TO SYRIA AND PLO. HAARETZ (GOLAN) CLAIMS THAT RABIN'S REVERSAL OF PREVIOUS POSITION CONCERNING POLITICAL NATURE OF NEXT STAGE AND NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLARATION HAS TWOFOLD EXPLANATION: (A) SECRETARY ON LAST MIDEAST VISIT MADE IT CLEAR TO HIM THAT EGYPT WOULD NOT ACCEDE TO THESE DEMANDS AND (B) SUBSEQUENT RESEARCH BY GOI LEGAL ADVISER HAS UNDERLINED VAGUE STATUS OF NON-BELLIGERENCY CONCEPT IN INTERNATIONAL LAW.

8. COMMENTATORS BELIEVE EGYPTIAN POSITION SINCE RABAT HAS SIGNIFICANTLY HARDENED. IN LAST FEW DAYS MEDIA HAVE HIGHLIGHTED REPORTS FROM CAIRO THAT GOE HAS GIVEN RABIN'S PROPOSAL A "COOL RECEPTION" AND INTENDS TO INSSIT ON ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ABU RODEIS AS WELL AS FROM JIDDI AND MITLA PASSES. THEY HAVE ALSO NOTED THAT, CONTRARY TO INITIAL REPORTS, GOE HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER FAHMI WILL GO TO WASHINGTON.

9. HAARETZ DEC 6 REPORTS THAT SEVERAL MINISTERS INTEND TO DISCUSS RABIN'S DECLARATIONS AT DEC 8 CABINET MEETING, AND WILL RAISE POINTS NOTED ABOVE. MINISTERS REPORTEDLY ARE ALSO DISTURBED BY RABIN'S STATEMENT THAT GOI POLICY IS TO ISOLATE SYRIA FROM EGYPT, NOTING THAT PM HAD SAID A MONTH EARLIER IN NEWSPAPER ARTICLE THAT SUCH DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE AGAINST ISRAELI'S INTEREST.

10. COMMENT: THE MIXED AND PREDOMINATLY NEGATIVE REACTION TO RABIN'S LATEST DECLARATIONS, BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY (CAIRO 9881), WERE UNDOUBTEDLY TO BE EXPECTED, GIVEN COMPLEXITY OF ISSUES AND, WHAT SEEMS TO US, MIXTURE OF MOTIVES ON RABIN'S PART. WE THINK RABIN DOES WANT TO IMPROVE CHANCES OF STEP-BY-STEP NEGOTIATIONS BY SHOWING FORWARD MOVEMENT IN GOI POSITION. HE MAY ALSO VIEW HIS PROPOSALS AS NECESSARY GESTURE IN DIRECTION OF US AND FOREIGN PUBLIC OPINION TO CHECK GROWING ACCUSATIONS THAT GOI HAS NOT DONE ENOUGH. RABIN HAS BEEN MAKING POINT CONSISTENTLY IN RECENT MONTHS THAT IF SITUATION DETERIORATES TO POINT OF HOSTILITIES, ISRAEL

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 07072 02 OF 02 061438Z

MUST HAVE RECORD SHOWING IT TRIED TO MAKE NEGOTIATIONS AS SUCCESS.
AT SAME TIME, RESISTANCE OF ISRAELIS ACROSS BROAD POLITICAL SPECTRUM
TO PARTIAL SETTLEMENTS WITHOUT ARAB POLITICAL CONCESSIONS POSES
DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEM OF MAJOR DIMENSIONS.
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